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Dr. K.M.Munshi
(1887 - 1971) 15

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TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH
Dr. K.M. MUNSHI
(recorded on 18.10.1966)

Interviewer: When did you, Sir, come into contact with Jawaharlal?

Dr. Munshi: I think I first met him some time between 1917 and 1919. Mrs. Besant's All-India Home Rule League was re-organised after her arrest. Mr. Jinnah became the Chairman of its Bombay Branch. I was on its committee and later became one of the Secretaries of its Bombay Branch. Motilalji was the Chairman of the U.P. Branch and Jawaharlal was one of the League's General Secretaries, I think. The other General Secretary was Mr. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer. It was about this time that I first came into contact with Jawaharlal. After I rejoined the Congress in 1930, we came into close contact at the Karachi session of the Congress in March 1931. Vallabhbhai Patel was then the President of the Congress. The fundamental rights, which were suggested by the members of the A.I.C.C. at Karachi, were referred to a sub-Committee consisting of Jawaharlal, Rajagopalachari and myself. The basis was a draft prepared by Jawaharlal.

Interviewer: These fundamental rights, Sir, were very important landmarks in the evolution of the Congress ideology. Was there any difference of opinion in this committee or were you unanimous?

Dr. Munshi: Some members wanted many more fundamental rights than were necessary, but most members of the A.I.C.C. were of the view that some basic fundamental rights should be accepted by the Congress.

Interviewer: That is Panditji, Rajaji and yourself agreed about this.

Dr. Munshi: We were a kind of sorting committee. All kinds

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of people had moved amendments to Jawaharlal's draft. They were sent to the sub-committee for scrutiny.

Interviewer: Do you think that it was due to Jawaharlal Nehru's initiative that this thing was drawn up?

Dr. Munshi : The idea was certainly his.

Interviewer: I am asking this because it was true that Gandhiji, yourself, Rajaji, Subhash, all agreed because otherwise it would not have gone through. But was he the driving force, or was the idea in the air at the time?

Dr. Munshi In the Congress set-up at the time nothing happened without the consent of Gandhiji; not a draft was adopted unless he had revised or approved of it. I think the idea of incorporating the fundamental rights in a Congress resolution proceeded from Gandhiji, as it would help him to impress the Round Table Conference (which he was shortly to attend as the sole representative of the Congress) with the democratic ideals for which we stood. Subhas was brought to Karachi by some friends for consultation about the strategy to be adopted at the Round Table Conference, but, to my recollection, he did not participate in the A.I.C.C. meetings. My be he attended a sitting or two.

Interviewer: Planning and the idea that the capitalists and the masses and capitalism and landlordism was ....

Dr. Munshi: So far as I remember, Jawaharlal was for planning, but he did not express himself fully on the problem of planning or fundamental rights. Often, in speeches, he took an extreme attitude, but modified it to suit the temper of the audience which he wanted to carry with him.

Interviewer: He was prepared to adapt himself?

Dr. Munshi: Up to a point.

Interviewer: After the Karachi Congress, when did you really come into contact with him?

Dr. Munshi: We came into closer contact when the Congress accepted office in 1937 under the Government of India Act, 1935, and I became the Home Minister of Bombay.

Interviewer: Then he was the Congress President.

Dr. Munshi: When we took office, I think he was the Congress President. My first taste of his temper was scarcely happy. A few days after we accepted office, he came to Bombay and sent for me. His first question was: "Why have you not removed the ban on the Communists? Why have you not cancelled the orders prescribing books?" I explained to him that I was studying the Communist movement from the secret files - Bombay was the cockpit of Communism - and that as soon as I felt there would not be any serious violation of law and order, I would remove the ban. At that time the Communists were staging lightning strikes almost every day and unless I reviewed the whole situation, I wouldn't be able to decide what action I should take. As regards books, I said, there were hundreds of files on prescribed books and I was trying to go through them as fast as I could. He lost his temper and said: "You have already become a police officer!" I bundled up my papers and left. I must, however, add that there has hardly been any other occasion when I became the object of his temperamental outburst. On the following Sunday I went to Gandhiji and told him that the Governor, with whom I had talked about the release of the Communist leaders, had stated: "You can do so over my dead body". On the other hand, Jawaharlal had said that I had already become a police officer. I pointed out to Gandhiji that the situation was critical, as

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lightning strikes threatened the law and order situation and that I could not risk disturbing the peace of Bombay by accepting Jawaharlal's directions. Then I asked for his guidance. Gandhiji's reaction gave me confidence. He said: "I have entrusted the law and order situation to you. Your duty is to work for it. Take your own time to study the situation. Take such decisions as you think proper. If Brabourne refuses to accept your advice, submit your resignation to him. If Jawaharlal insists on your issuing orders which you do not approve, you have my permission to offer him your resignation".

Interviewer: After that, Sir, the Congress Ministry resigned and the 1942 movement came and then you came into contact with him at the time of the partition, the transfer of power, etc. Isn't it?

Dr. Munshi In 1936-37 when the Congress took office I was asked to become the Home Minister of Bombay Province. After the resignation of the Congress Ministries, Gandhiji started individual satyagraha in which I took part and was arrested and sent to jail early in 1940. After a few months in prison I developed acute diarrhoea and became dangerously ill. So the Government released me. Then came the communal riots in which, thanks to Gandhiji's insistence on non-violence, Hindus were helplessly exposed to an orgy of violence by Muslims. With Gandhiji's blessings, I left the Congress on the issue of Akhand Hindusthan and stayed out for the next few years. I lost contact with Jawaharlal who, with other Congress leaders, was in jail during the 'Quit India' Movement. The next thing I remember is that in 1946 the A.I.C.C. set up a Committee of constitutional experts in which Jawaharlal included me. Thus began our intimate association which continued for more than fifteen years, including the period of the Constitutent Assembly when we worked together closely.

Interviewer: What was his contribution to the making

of the Constitution? Was it marginal or central or did he leave it to the experts?

Dr. Munshi: He held certain fundamental views and in respect of them he used to intervene either directly or through some other person. I came into contact with him closely regarding several aspects of Constitution-making -- for instance, Rules of the Constituent Assembly. My idea was that by framing rules for the Assembly as a whole we could become a sovereign body and circumvent the Cabinet Mission Plan, one of the main planks of which was the grouping of provinces under three Sections. I showed Gandhiji the Rules I had drafted. He approved of what I had done and wrote letters commending my suggestions to Jawaharlal and Sardar. I talked to Jawaharlal and discussed the Rules with him. This was one of the important aspects of Constitution-making and so I remember my talks with Jawaharlal. I frequently discussed with him matters connected with the Constitution.

Interviewer: You said he was interested in certain fundamentals. I suppose he was interested in making the Constitution democratic?

Dr. Munshi: He had a curious attitude. He thought he could produce the results achieved by Soviet Russia through non-violent and democratic means. Secondly, he did not attach much importance to stability; his immense popularity in the country kept him under the illusion that, whatever he did, his leadership would guarantee stability. Even with regard to socialism, he swore by it time and again creating difficulties for his colleagues, but invariably accepted a compromise.

Interview: That you will agree, Sir, is a healthy thing in a politician - realism, not to give the people more than what they can take.

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Dr. Munshi: Jawaharlal's assumption that Marxian results could be produced through democracy was entirely incorrect. If you give to the citizens guaranteed rights, you can't have socialism. Socialism would mean State control of the ordinary life of the citizen, which is incompatible with democracy. You can't deprive citizens of the right to property and maintain the fundamental freedoms. What Jawaharlal attempted was not realistic; he failed properly to assess the disruptive forces that his policy was bound to generate.

Interviewer: What was Gandhiji's attitude at this time to property?

Dr. Munshi: Gandhiji's attitude was different. He did not want any expropriation of property. He believed in creating public opinion which would compel the capitalist to give a larger share of his wealth to the people. His leadership was such that it created a moral influence over the people.

Interviewer: You think, Sir, that was practicable?

Dr. Munshi: Yes, I think it was practicable. Personally I think this way: The whole Hindu idea of "daan" is based on trusteeship. If you are a rich man, you should be respected not for your wealth but for the "daan" you have given. In that way more emphasis was placed on your generosity and charity than on the wealth that you possess.

Interviewer: Coming back to the Constitution, Sir, the influence of Jawaharlal Nehru on the shape of the Constitution, therefore, was in your opinion, in a certain direction?

Dr. Munshi: Yes. He wanted a full-fledged democracy. Fundamental Rights, he wanted. But at the same time he wanted

parliamentary supremacy. He failed to realise that you cannot give absolute supremacy to Parliament and at the same time have a constitutional guarantee of fundamental freedoms.

Interviewer: He was open to argument?

Dr. Munshi: He was open to argument, not in the ordinary sense, but in this way: he could gauge the strength of opposition at a particular moment and accept a compromise, awaiting another opportunity to re-open the question. For instance, in the matter of partition of the country, after bitter experience, Sardar and he, being pledged to non-violence, came to the fateful conclusion that, if countrywide bloodshed and horrors were to be avoided, partition was inevitable.

Interviewer: One of the criticisms now being offered by British critics, Pakistani critics and even by some Indian critics is that, if the Congress had not done certain things, there would have been no partition. For example, they say that if the Congress had accepted the Communal Award and Jinnah's Fourteen Points, or if the Congress had formed a coalition with the Muslim League in 1937-39, there would have been no partition.

Dr. Munshi: It is a very long story. I have discussed it at length in my book, 'Pilgrimage to Freedom'. Those who think that, if the Congress had done something other than what it did, there would have been no partition, miss a vital point. I have worked with Jinnah and knew him well. I knew his mental working. I was his trusted lieutenant in the Home Rule League. In the Lucknow Pact and, later, in the Fourteen Points he envisaged, which he turned into a slogan, and in the stubborn insistence on partition, he reflected the master-racism qua Hindus which characterised a section of the Muslim intellectuals, though he himself did not share the master-racist view.

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He was a masterful person in his own right and could assume effective leadership of the master-racists. The nationalist Muslims, some of whom were noble patriots, could not secure the support of the Muslim masses in the country. It is all very well to say that, if we had adopted a particular course, partition would have been avoided. Yes, it could have been avoided if Hindus, who were a majority, were prepared to subordinate themselves to the aggressive attitude of the Muslim master-racists. Even long after separation the master-racist mentality dominates certain Pakistani leaders. Their acts and utterances obviously stem from the vicious wish that even after the partition of the sub-continent they should dominate India.

Interviewer: Do you think, Sir, that if the Congress had not resigned in 1939, if the Ministries had remained in office and if the British Government under Lord Linlithgow had not taken a hostile attitude, the Pakistan Movement would not have gathered momentum?

Dr. Munshi: When I was the Home Minister of Bombay I had an interview with Lord Linlithgow at which he gave me a message intended to be transmitted to Gandhiji. This is the gist of what he told me: 'I warn you that if you do not accept my Federal Scheme, Jinnah will dictate his terms and Pakistan will come. Tell Gandhi to listen to me and accept the Federal Scheme.' I naturally conveyed it to Gandhiji, but he would not accept Linlithgow's analysis. I am sorry to say some of our leaders, including Jawaharlal himself, believed that the masses of the Muslims were with them -- with the Congress -- and that once they went to the polls, the Muslim masses would vote with the Congress. I was sure no such thing would happen and no such thing happened. Even if we had had coalition Ministries in the Provinces, what happened in the Congo years later would have been enacted in our country. Even the Coalition Ministry which we had at the Centre for a few months

the Interim Government -- was a disgraceful show from all points of view. With such a Ministry, the Congress could never have fulfilled the mission for which it stood.

<u>Interviewer</u>: The Coalition Ministry in 1946 was, of course, formed between the Congress and the Muslim League at a very tense moment. But let us suppose a Coalition Ministry was formed in Bombay in 1937. There is a story in Kanji Dwarkadas's book that the Muslim League offered to give two members to the Cabinet under Mr. Kher and Mr. Kher had some kind of conversation on that basis, but he was repudiated.

<u>Dr. Munshi</u>: Kanji Dwarkadas has his own way of saying things; but the negotiations took place in a house which was lent to me by a friend in Poona, where Sardar (Patel) and Maulana (Azad) were my guests. Kher and myself were present at most of these interviews. An offer was made on behalf of Jinnah that he was willing to cooperate with the Congress provided that two persons nominated by him were included in the Cabinet. It was suggested to Jinnah that his nominees would have to accept the Congress discipline so long as they were Ministers and also accept the principle of joint responsibility for all majority decisions. Jinnah insisted, however, that his nominees would not be amenable to the discipline of the Congress and that they would not even accept the doctrine of joint responsibility. Maulana and Sardar both rejected the offer because, if it were accepted, Jinnah would have dictated the whole policy of the Government through his nominess, who, on every occasion, would threaten to resign.

<u>Interviewer:</u> Thank you, Sir, because this contradicts a story which is being made current by people who do not know the facts. Since the talks took place in your house, so far as Bombay is concerned, you are in a position to remove the

misconception. There were only two important States where this thing mattered - - Bombay and U.P. I am grateful to you for correcting the story about Bombay.

Dr. Munshi: The offer was made by Jinnah through Sir Cowasjee Jehangir. It was so hopelessly undemocratic that it would have imposed Jinnah's dictatorship over the Bombay Government.

Interviewer: And that also, Sir, at a time when Mr. Jinnah could not boast of much following in Bombay.

Dr. Munshi: The Muslim League did not have any following worth the name in Bombay at the time. There were many independent Muslim members in the Bombay Legislative Council and quite a few of them tried to secure a place in the Ministry. It was only when the Congress selected Mohammed Yasin Nuri, an Ahmedabad lawyer with a nationalist outlook, that the independent Muslim members joined the Muslim League. Jinnah's position in the country was not so powerful then. He was trying to manoeuvre himself into a position of irresistible power. As a matter of fact, it was only when World War II was in the offing and the British Government began to feel that we would not stand by them during the war that they changed over and courted Jinnah and built him up on the international scene as a great leader and as a counter-weight against Gandhiji.

Interviewer: Do you think, Sir, that if the Cripps proposal had gone through, our position would have been better ultimately?

Dr. Munshi: The Cripps proposals were very vague; I am surprised that they came from an eminent constitutional lawyer like Cripps. He and Maulana carried on negotiations without the same word being understood in the same sense. There was

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talk of a National Government. Which National Government and responsible to whom? Would there be joint responsibility or not? All these were intricate problems of constitutional importance. In my opinion the best course would have been for the Congress Ministries to continue in office in 1939. The British Government was keen to make friends with the Congress. That was the only time during all these years when I found that the interests of the Congress and the British Government were identical. I pleaded with the leaders, but mine was a voice in the wilderness. My view was that, if we had to fight a war of independence, helping England to fight the War would have been our own war of independence.

<u>Interviewer</u>: So you think that it was very unfortunate that the War came at that time.

<u>Dr. Munshi</u>: Yes. I went to Gandhiji to secure his terms of settlement on which the Congress would remain in office. He gave me a draft which I transmitted to the Viceroy through the Governor of Bombay. However, by that time our people had made it impossible for the British to believe for a moment that we would stand by them in the War if we were in power. It was a great occasion missed; otherwise, we could have been saved from all that followed.

<u>Interviewer</u>: Do you think that another chance came during the Cabinet Mission proposals? Could the Cabinet Mission proposals have promoted national unity?

<u>Dr. Munshi</u>: They would not have promoted national unity. By that time a stage had been reached where mere phrases could not bring abut a harmonious spirit.

<u>Interviewer</u>: Because Mr. Jinnah had become too powerful.

<u>Dr. Munshi</u>: Every time, you see, Jinnah raised his demands.

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There was first the Lucknow Pact which was accepted on the assurance that it would bring harmony. Later he said: "Give me my Fourteen Points and separate electorates and I will bring the Muslims to you". We submitted to it. Later still he said: "Accept the Communal Award, and everything will be all right". Every time he talked, his price became much higher. He did not expect that Pakistan would be ever consented to by the Congress. He wanted to dominate the whole situation till he could have the whole of India at his feet.

Interviewer: This is very interesting. Do you think, Sir, that Jinnah was from the very beginning a nationalist only in form and appearance and communal at heart? Or, do you think he became bitter at some stage? You have seen him at close quarters.

Dr. Munshi: As I have told you, I was the Secretary and he was the President of the Bombay Home Rule League, and we were great friends. I have not come across a better nationalist than what he was in those days.

Interviewer: Jinnah of 1917.

Dr. Munshi: No Even of 1918, '19, '20, '21 and '22. It was only when Gandhiji arrived on the scene and his mysterious control over the masses became formidable that Jinnah withdrew from the Congress.

Interviewer: Was it logical or was it a kind of jealousy on the part of Jinnah?

Dr. Munshi: As soon as Gandhiji chose the Ali Brothers as his colleagues, Jinnah realised that this would end only in trouble between the two communities. He withdrew from active politics for some years. He was going to settle

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down in England; he even asked me whether I would purchase his library. He simply hated the kind of mass movement which Gandhiji was stirring up, because he thought that it would be very dangerous to the successful evolution of a democratic government.

Interviewer: But ultimately, he also roused that kind of movement among the Muslims.

Dr. Munshi: He saw that the Muslim League lacked leadership and that, if he had the League under his control, he could make capital of the situation. When the Congress accepted office in several provinces in 1937, Jinnah felt so helpless that he would have given anything to work with the Congress. An interesting event happened at the Second Round Table Conference. Jinnah tentatively agreed to some sort of federation including the Muslim majority provinces, provided a statutory majority was provided for Muslims in the Punjab. The next day, however, he went back on his word, saying that his people would not accept it. This means that at one stage he was prepared to have a united country -- at a price. But he changed completely. He had found in the Muslim League and the mass aggression by the Muslims an instrument for carving out a separate country. I sponsored the "Akhand Hindustan" movement but ultimately I also became convinced that the wisest thing in the circumstances was to accept partition.

Interviewer: Maulana Azad in his book has passed very severe strictures against Pandit Jawaharlal and Sardar Patel for accepting Partition. He in fact blames Sardar Patel more than Pandit Nehru. He feels that it was Sardar Patel who made Gandhiji's position untenable.

Dr. Munshi: There was nothing of the kind. The fact of the matter was that Mountbatten had approved of a plan evolved

by Lord Ismay, according to which all the provinces were to be made fully autonomous. He had sent the plan to England for the approval of the British Cabinet. V.P. Menon dissented and evolved his own scheme. Jawaharlal refused to consider the Ismay plan. V.P. Menon convinced Mountbatten that his (Menon's) plan was better and between them, they convinced Jawaharlal that it was a good solution of the problem. That was done in Simla.

<u>Interviewer</u>: It means, Sir, that Sardar Patel accepted partition because he felt that it was just coming and that there was no alternative. It was an evil, but a necessary evil as that.

<u>Dr. Munshi</u>: At first Sardar Patel was against partition in principle; but, when he saw that a civil war was raging in the whole country and could not be stopped and that the British would not or could not help in suppressing lawlessness, he came to the conclusion that for the two communities to deal with each other as State to State was better than perpetual internal strife.

<u>Interviewer:</u> When do you think this stage was reached, at the end of 1946 or beginning of 1947? Riots came in Calcutta in August, 1946, Punjab riots came in March 1947 and the Mountbatten Plan in June, 1947.

Dr. Munshi: This took place almost about the time Lord Mountbatten came to India. I don't remember the date offhand. Sardar and I used to walk daily on the lawns of Birla House in New Delhi. One day he said, 'Hallo, Akhand Hindustani, we have decided to divide Hindustan. We are going to have Pakistan. It is impossible to carry on as at present. There is bound to be a civil war which may last for years.'

<u>Interviewer</u>: Some people have said that the Cabinet Mission Plan might have worked if the Congress leaders had

been more restrained and if Jawaharlal, for example, had not said that the Constituent Assembly would be a sovereign body. Do you think that these statements did not make any difference and Jinnah was working according to his own plans?

Dr. Munshi: Jinnah was first interested to have the Muslim majority States combined into a single Pakistan with the possibility of the inclusion of Assam. He therefore stood by the Zonal Plan. All our ingenuity was used to circumvent the Zonal Plan of the Cabinet Mission.

Interviewer: That brings me to an interesting point. You saw Mr. Jinnah from very close quarters for about thirty years from 1917 onwards.

Dr. Munshi: I joined the Bombay Bar in 1913 and very cordial relations sprang up between us. When the Home Rule League was re-organised in Bombay, we worked together. It was only when he was convinced that Gandhiji's movement was dangerous in the extreme that he felt a Coalition Government was not possible.

Interviewer: We were talking about the Cabinet Mission Plan.

Dr. Munshi: Yes, during the negotiations with the British Government, Jawaharlal gave expression to his views which were shared by most of the Congress leaders. But while the others were reticent, he was forthright in his condemnation of any scheme which would deny to India a free and democratic government.

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<u>Interviewer:</u> Therefore, Sir, the statement about the Constituent Assembly being sovereign, even though the Cabinet Mission Plan had been enforced, was shared by all the Congress leaders and the Congress Working Committee.

<u>Dr. Munshi</u>: Of course, it was. As a matter of fact I had discussions with Gandhiji, Jawaharlal and Sardar about it and all of them disliked the Zonal Scheme and were worried about the fate of Assam. Then I urged that under the Cabinet Mission Plan the rule-making powers had not been given to the Zones and that the Constituent Assembly could assert its supremacy by framing appropriate rules. This was done, and the Constituent Assembly adopted the rules. Once the Constituent Assembly assumed sovereign power, it acquired a new status. As I stated in the debate, "Today the Constituent Assembly has become sovereign".

<u>Interviewer</u>: What was, Sir, Gandhiji's attitude in the last few days? Pyarelal in his book has made it appear as if Sardar Patel and Jawaharlal were bypassing Gandhiji and not consulting him or were ignoring him.

<u>Dr. Munshi</u>: It was a misfortune in this sense that Gandhiji had come to the conclusion that partition was an evil. His attitude was: 'Let Jinnah take the whole Government and then we shall see about it. But I don't agree to partition'. The important question to which he could not give an answer was: Was the country prepared to take up the fight again in the foreseeable future? Jawaharlal and Vallabhbhai were convinced that it was not possible for the people to stage a movement then and that they should seize the opportunity to take power and utilise it for the development of freedom. Before the final stage, Gandhiji was, of course, opposed to this line of thinking. He was an apostle of non-violence, and he was stoutly opposed to partition; he had even said: 'You will get Pakistan only

over my dead body'. I think the wisest step taken by Jawaharlal and Vallabhbhai was to accept partition.

Interviewer: Do you think that Gandhiji was unable to understand Jinnah and the Muslim League? Did he credit him with a greater changeability and being open to conviction than he actually was?

Dr. Munshi He was shrewd enough to see from a practical point of view that it was impossible to deal with the Muslim League except on the basis of violence. At the same time he had an idea that, if he stood ready for compromise, some day Jinnah might agree to join some semblance of a National Government. I knew Gandhiji was struggling throughout to produce a non-violent formula which would satisfy everybody; but Jinnah was determined not to listen to him.

Interviewer: Do you think that Jinnah could have been handled better by other Congress leaders, by Jawaharlal, Patel, Rajaji and others, than by Gandhiji?

Dr. Munshi No, no. Jinnah held Sardar and Jawaharlal as well as Gandhiji in supreme contempt. When on one occasion Wavell asked him to see Gandhiji, he saw him and then Jinnah is reported to have said to the Viceroy that "he (Gandhiji) is the worst Hindu in the country; he wants to dominate all of us". Jinnah would not accept the fact that the Muslims were a minority; he simply wanted them to dominate the rest of the country.

Interviewer Am I right in thinking that Jinnah's attitude towards Gandhiji was perverse -- based on personal prejudice and jealousy or whatever you may call it?

Dr. Munshi I would rather put it this way. Jinnah

was a realist, a man of very strong commonsense. First of all, he felt mortally wounded when he had to part company with the Congress. So long as he was a nationalist, he could not understand why the Ali Brothers were built up as national leaders. Then, of course, he had a superiority complex of his own. After he became the President of the Muslim League, he tried to make it stronger. When the Congress took office in 1937, his fortunes were at the lowest ebb. Neither the Governor nor the Viceroy would listen to him. When ~~he~~ we broke with the British Government by resigning office, he found the opportunity and took full advantage of it.

<u>Interviewer</u>: What was Sardar Patel's attitude towards Jinnah? He suspected him of communalism throughout or he saw the cards as they were being played in 1947 and came to this conclusion?

<u>Dr. Munshi</u> Personally Jinnah was not a communalist, but the leaders of the Muslims League were. Once he saw that the Muslim masses were ready to follow him, he decided to carve out a kingdom for them. Let us not forget that he was the only person in history who, by masterful strategy and manipulating a difficult situation, established almost an empire.

<u>Interviewer:</u> Then, Sir, in carving out this kingdom, he did not solve the Hindu-Muslim problem. He only projected it to the international plane.

<u>Dr. Munshi</u>: Do not forget this important fact that the master-racism of a small intellectual section of Muslims in North India was a powerful factor. True, the master-racists were small in number; but, once they raised the cy of "religion in danger", the intellectual Mussalmans who were with the Congress became silent and the Muslim masses went mad.

Interviewer: Do you have, Sir, any personal recollection of Jinnah as a colleague or a companion? He had also some better side to him.

Dr. Munshi He was generally stiff in his behaviour, but he was a very understanding man. What appealed to me about him was that he was a straight-forward, forthright man -- a great realist and tactician. If Gandhiji had established partnership with him, things might have been quite different. Jinnah was not a master-racist himself, but had a superiority complex of his own; throughout he was most practical. He was an honest man. And never did he conceal his disagreement with Gandhiji.

Interviewer: Do you think that at any stage, say in the 1930's or even later, Jinnah could have been won over by being made the Congress President?

Dr. Munshi: I think after 1922, when he left the Congress, he would never have anything to do with Gandhiji. At a conference held at the request of C.R. Das, at Jayakar's house, to consider the possibility of founding the Swaraj Party, Jinnah made it clear that he would not be a party to any move in which Gandhiji would dominate because, he said, "he (Gandhiji) was only creating mass hysteria among Hindus".

Interviewer: Sir, the point I made was that Jinnah evoked mass hysteria among the Muslims in 1946-47.

Dr. Munshi: No, that was there already. The Muslim community in those days (I am talking of united India) consisted of three sets of people. First, there were large masses who maintained cordial relations with Hindus in the villages and towns. Then there were the intellectuals who had for centuries been living with the Hindus on good terms, but few of them were vocal and many did not like to risk the displeasure of their own community by openly expressing their views. The third section was a very small one. It comprised a section of Punjab and U.P.

Muslims who were descended from those foreigners invited from abroad by Mughals and Afghans and who had a complex that the Hindus were their slaves and that they (Muslims) must be the masters in this country.

Interviewer: May I ask you, Sir, to say a few words on your association with Pandit Nehru in the Cabinet as a Minister? How did you find him -- very pleasant to work with and very helpful?

Dr. Munshi: He generally left the Ministers free to deal with their portfolios and never interfered except when some high policy was involved. The difficulty with him was that he enjoyed the powers of a dictator, but unlike successful dictators, he could never go into details. As soon as you began to talk of the details of a problem, he would just doze off on his sofa as if he was tired. He had no patience to adjust his views to the realities of the situation. Then when he spoke something emphatically, he made it very difficult for anyone to say anything to the contrary. Take, for instance, the successive Plans. They were exaggerated because everybody concerned wanted to play up to him. He had created an atmosphere in which anyone who anticipated his wishes and played up to his wishes could find favour with him. Therefore, we never dared to put the realities before him. Once or twice I told him to give me one hour in a whole week to explain to him my difficulties in regard to the food portfolio. I said: "I must get your backing because whatever I do now is useless unless you back me". He would say, "Munshi, do whatever you like. I have got no objection to it". Finish. But when in Parliament if I said something, he would straightway get up and contradict me and win applause from the other side. This habit of his had the result of making the Ministers look foolish.

Interviewer: But he worked very hard, say 16 to 17 hours

a day.

Dr. Munshi: He was a wonderful worker. Not only that, but his mind was fixed on broad problems and ideals and gigantic prize shows. The result was that when it came to realities he was invariably led by those who commanded his confidence for the moment. For instance, the Commonwealth would not have come into existence but for him. The United Nations also would not have succeeded to the extent it did but for him. In India also he did many things which were for the good of the people. But, at the same time, he was never able to realise the practical dangers of what he was getting the people to accept.

Interviewer: He was very quick and prompt with file work. If you sent any letter to him or write to him, did you get a prompt reply?

Dr. Munshi: Immediately, the next day or the day after. Even after I parted company with him and the Congress and joined the Swatantra Party, if I wrote to him, his reply would come promptly. And this parting of ways did not come in the way of our relations being very cordial. He had taken an interest in my putting up an Engineering College in the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. In spite of his failing health, he came to Bombay specially to inaugurate the College. It was a gesture of friendliness which I will never forget.

Interviewer: I believe, he worked very late every night answering every single letter.

Dr. Munshi: Not every single letter. He had selected some people with whom he corresponded regularly. He never replied to unimportant or trivial letters. But whenever the person he knew had something to say, or for whom he had regard, he immediately replied.

Interviewer: I also find that there were letters to him

from unknown people and others who did not matter much. He answered them in detail. Apparently he was facile, very quick in drafting.

Dr. Munshi: He dictated a letter absolutely word-perfect. Imperfections came when he was thinking on his legs, for example, in Parliament. So there were two Nehrus, one Nehru who would make brilliant speeches of historical importance, beautifully phrased. But suddenly would emerge the other Nehru; in the midst of a speech he would switch off and on to doubts. There was a heavy strain on him and he did not know how to concentrate on important work and decentralise his activities.

Interviewer: You were in the Cabinet when Sardar Patel and he were together?

Dr. Munshi: Yes, I was there. On 13th May, 1950, I became a Minister. Sardar died later, on 15.12.1950. So, I worked with them for about eight months.

Interviewer: Am I right in saying that what people have been talking about their differences is exaggerated? They got on very well together except on certain occasions.

Dr. Munshi: No, the thing was this. Sardar was deeply concerned about stability in the country; he was anxious that somehow the country should remain stable, whatever the cost. But Jawaharlal was keen to bring about all kinds of changes rapidly, regardless of the country's capacity to benefit by them. Rapid changes necessarily unsettled life. So there was a sharp difference of opinion between them. There were also two camps among politicians. During the last few months before Sardar's death, their relations became strained. Sardar was furious at times at Jawaharlal's attacks on him. When I was on a brief visit to Delhi on 30th January 1948, Sardar told me at about 4 O' clock in the afternoon that he was going to Gandhiji for the purpose

of pressing his resignation. He was to see Gandhiji later evening. On that very evening Gandhiji was shot dead by Godse.

Interviewer: Did Sardar tell you anything about this conversation, his last with Gandhiji?

Dr. Munshi: No, he did not. But soon after Gandhiji died and there was a meeting of the Parliamentary Legislative Party, all members appealed to them to become friends and carry on the affairs of the State. Their difference had come very much to the forefront during the few months preceding Gandhiji's death. As they embraced each other, most of the members present were in tears.

Interviewer: Was Gandhiji very unhappy during the last few days? You were with him in those days.

Dr. Munshi: He was very unhappy for several years. He was unhappy at the power complex which his principal disciples had developed.

Interviewer: Even in the few months?

Dr. Munshi: No. It had been developing slowly from the time we first took office. Another thing that made Gandhiji unhappy was the attitude of the Government of India over the payment of Rs.55-crores to Pakistan. He enforced his will to pay the amount. Certain Muslim Nationalists went to Gandhiji often and complained:

"बापू, हम तो मर गये, सरदार हमें Wipe out करता है
न इधर के रहे, न उधर के रहे"

(Bapu, we are finished. Sardar is wiping us out. We do not belong here, nor to Pakistan).

That was the kind of talk which prejudiced him against Sardar.

Sardar felt very much grieved that Gandhiji should believe such complaints.

Interviewer: Gandhiji was, therefore, open to tale-bearing to some extent? He was very shrewd and could put a check on this kind of thing.

Dr. Munshi: He had a very curious trait. He had a capacity for evoking confidence. So everybody went to him and unburdened himself about everything. There was no question of tale-bearing.

Interviewer: Gandhiji was close to you for so many years. What was the secret of his leadership, the way he guided this country all these years and took everybody with him?

Dr. Munshi: For one thing, he had much less shrewdness than Patel and not the subtlety of Rajaji. He did not have the vague idealism of Jawaharlal, but he had one quality. He could release a mysterious stream of faith in whatever he said. His mysticism gave him the power to move hearts without any effort. When the 'Quit India' idea was first mooted by him before a few of us, he said: "Now I have found the easiest way. The British must quit India". "What?" I asked, "During the war will the British leave? It would only invite many Jallianwala Baghs". He said, "I don't mind hundreds of Jallianwala Baghs, but the British must quit". And then later in the day about fifteen other leaders of the Congress joined us, and he said,"This is the only way. They must quit India". Later, more people came and attended the prayer meeting; he assumed the role of prophet of 'Quit India', and the next morning, the idea fell like a bomb-shell on the country and everybody said, "Yes, 'Quit India' is the only remedy". In fact, it was the most absurd thing in the world; but curiously enough, he could evoke faith in millions. You can give no explanation to Gandhiji's ways on a purely intellectual basis.

Interviewer: That is true; that is a very great quality, and a rare quality. But do you think that he also had great capacity to read his correspondence, to deal with individuals? Did he attend to details?

Dr. Munshi: He was a very meticulous man. Not only every detail, but every individual received attention. His one line on a post-card would touch you to the core. When he talked to a man, he talked to the real man; but as soon as he found that the man was untruthful, he just rejected him.

Interviewer: You think he was a very good judge of men?

Dr. Munshi: Yes, a good judge of men -- not as good as Sardar was. He would call him and tell him: "This is what I have heard. Now tell me the whole thing". The person would invariably tell him the truth and he would purify him -- a sort of Father Confessor. He could enter into the hearts of the individuals as well.

Interviewer: When you were Home Minister in Bombay in 1937-39, what was the attitude of the British Government towards Gandhi?

Dr. Munshi: Towards Gandhiji the attitude was friendly. Once an agreement was reached about the Governors not using their power over the heads of the Ministers, they were friendly -- up to a point. Then when the War came, the difficulties began. In an interview with me, Lord Linlithgow said in effect: "I would give you the same assurance for the Centre which I have given you for the Provinces -- that the Viceroy will not interfere. I warn you that if you do not take this opportunity and do not allow me to put the Federal Part of the 1935 Act into practice, India would be divided. Jinnah will ruin the country".

Interviewer: Do you think, Sir, that if the Sapru Plan

had been given effect to, say, in 1940, and the War had not broken out, it would have worked?

Dr. Munshi: Oh, yes, completely.

Interviewer: In that case there would have been no partition and things would have settled down to some kind of permanence?

Dr. Munshi: The position is this. As I have already told you, a small section of the Muslim community, particularly in the North, was suffering from a master-race complex. They could not reconcile themselves to be citizens with equal rights with the Hindus in a country which had a Hindu majority. Even now, it is the confirmed attitude of the master-racists in Pakistan. Witness, for instance, the statements made by Mr. Bhutto, till recently Pakistan's External Affairs Minister. He talked of the 800 years of Muslim rule -- a blatant falsehood. This section was not interested in anything else. But the bulk of the Muslims, except when they were lashed into religious fury, had a desire to maintain cordial relations with the Hindus throughout the country.

Interviewer: So you feel the misfortune was the combination of circumstances; the War complicated the situation.

Dr. Munshi: I think we committed the greatest blunder in resigning in 1939. Rajaji and I did the utmost that we could to avoid resignation. Sir Roger Lumley, the then Governor of Bombay, asked me to see Gandhiji and get terms acceptable to him. Gandhiji told me to make a draft. I prepared it. He revised it and gave it to me. "Get me these terms and I will agree to continuance in office", he told me. I returned to Bombay and gave the terms to Sir Roger Lumley. But by that time the British had become convinced that Jawaharlal and Vallabhbhai did not mean business and that they would never stand by them in the War if greater powers were given to them. So they ignored the proposals.

Interviewer: It sounds very surprising if the British Government thought that, because Jawaharlal was anti-Fascist throughout.

Dr. Munshi: Don't call it anti-Fascist. The British Government was not Fascist at that time.

Interviewer: By anti-Fascist I mean, against Germans and Italians and Japanese and therefore, the British Government could have been sure of their sympathy.

Dr. Munshi: No. Our leaders did not mean business except on very drastic terms. According to Nehru, complete freedom should be given straightway with a right to determine India's attitude towards the war. Sardar was convinced that England was going to lose the war.

Interviewer: Do you think the 'Quit India' Movement in 1942 might have been due to the feeling that the British days were numbered and things like that?

Dr. Munshi: No. It was this way. The country was frustrated. There was difference of opinion among the leaders. Gandhiji was a magician. I think his idea was to put all of us in jail so that there would be no difference of opinion. It was also directed against the Government; if the British won, we would come out of jail and deal with them; if Japan won, even then we would be in jail and could deal with them.

Interviewer: Do you mean, therefore, that the Movement was not what it purported to be, it was something deeper than that?

Dr. Munshi: It was the only possible slogan which could cement all differences among leading Congressmen and result

in mass action which would hearten the country in that period of frustration. Gandhiji was perturbed at the fact that some of the Congress leaders were in favour of accepting the Cripps offer with suitable modifications. If the British were confident that we would fight the War loyally, they would have announced Dominion Status straightway.

Interviewer: That you think was the British difficulty -- the feeling that the Congress in any case would not help them?

Dr. Munshi: Some time before our threatened resignation, the British had come to the conclusion that, whatever we said and whatever they conceded, we would not fight the War on their side and could create difficulties for them.

Interviewer: The other difficulty was, Sir, that in 1939, when you resigned, the War had not taken that serious turn which it took later. The British were also not in such a desperate condition as in 1940 or 1942. A few months might have made the difference.

Dr. Munshi: I don't think so. Because when we resigned, we took a definite attitude that, unless the British promised us Dominion Status at the end of the War and set up a National Government in the interval, we would not co-operate. They were aware of the attitude of Jawaharlal and Sardar. Gandhiji, if we had promised co-operation, would have blessed the interim compromise, but the British knew that the other two leaders -- one because of his anti-British attitude and the other because of his convintion that Britain was going to lose -- were going to be the operative factors.

Interviewer: In 1946, was there any question of choosing Sardar Patel as the Prime Minister?

Dr. Munshi: No. There was no question of that at any time.

Sardar himself would never accept it. As a matter of fact, when some people asked him whether he should not become the Prime Minister, he laughed and said: "You know what will happen. Jawaharlal is well-known in the inter-national sphere and would enhance the prestige of India in the outside world. And, knowing him as I do, I think he is safer with me than in the opposition."

Interviewer: Was Sardar a very shrewd judge of men and situations?

Dr. Munshi: Oh my God! It was not shrewdness; it was an uncanny insight into the ways of individuals and situations. He could gauge the minds of men almost instinctively, and in situations, however difficult, he would find a way which was sure to finish the opposition. I have never seen a greater judge of men and situations than Sardar Patel.

Interviewer: Could you give us any instances about his perspicacity?

Dr. Munshi: There were so many instances and it would be difficult to name one. The riots in Delhi would not have been got under control except for his leadership. I was the Agent-General in Hyderabad for about nine months and I used to be in daily touch with him. But for him, Hyderabad would have been still flourishing as a Pakistan in the midst of India. He knew how to trust people and he knew how to take advantage of their weakness and strength alike. Only the confidence that he reposed in me enabled me to risk everything for liquidating Hyderabad. I know that in certain high quarters there were hostile influence at work, and it was even suggested that I should be removed; but Sardar stuck to his policy to the last. The whole credit for the intergration of Hyderabad goes to him. In the same way, the credit for removing the suspicions of the minority and the

integration of the States goes to him. These were achieved, thanks solely due to his judgment and skill. These three were the greatest achievements I can think of in history.

Interviewer: Thank you, Sir.